

361 broken up by the formation of new districts, often at some distance from the original town centre. In isolated parts and on the slopes of the mountain, where nature is conducive to prayer and meditation, many convents and madrasahs were erected; although several of these have been destroyed and others are disused and in ruins, about fifty have survived until the present time, while others again have been converted and incorporated in more recent buildings.

361 In the Moslem sector of the old town is the Maristan of Nur ad-Din, "one of the most famous hospitals of the Moslem world". It is of great architectural interest, but is unfortunately spoilt by the modern buildings which now surround it.

The doorway has a rich and original alveolate decoration, a classical pediment and a beautiful pair of doors. Over the entrance hall is a small ribbed onion dome, surmounted by a sort of truncated conical drum, made up of superimposed alveoles which are visible even from the outside, as in the case of the brick tomb of Zobeide near Baghdad. In the courtyard, with its two beautiful iwans (halls), fragments of inscriptions, lattice-work and marble inlay have been preserved.

361 The Nuriya Madrasah, to the south of the Great Mosque, has a similar dome above the mausoleum. Its doorway is distinguished by the pendant keystone motif, also to be seen at the Adiliya Madrasah, a "masterpiece of stereotomy and bonding" planned and constructed in the architectural style and by the methods characteristic of northern Syria. This latter madrasah, a fitting building for the headquarters of the Arab Academy, has been very carefully restored and rearranged. This building, together with the Zahiriya Madrasah (now the National Library), the house of Saladin's father, which was converted by the Sultan Beibars into a memorial college, and the Aziziya Madrasah (Saladin's tomb) form a fine architectural group to the north of the Great Mosque; these buildings are still adorned by a wealth of ancient works of art, inscriptions, mosaics, doors and windows.

The twofold influence of Mesopotamia and northern Syria can be seen in the art of the period of Nur ad-Din and Saladin.

Various mausolea are to be found outside the old town itself and slightly to the north, in the area between the river and the modern thoroughfare called Baghdad Street. That of Zayn ad-Din (Sitt ech-Châm, 1172), is the oldest example of such a building with a sepulchral dome surmounting two drums; the "Sultan Hasan" Mausoleum has a ribbed dome and an interesting decoration of stucco and painting; the Chamiya Madrasah, standing outside the city walls, contains one of the finest examples of plaster moulding in Damascus, beautiful inscriptions and the armatures of the old leaded-glass windows. The Mausoleum of Ibn al-Moqaddam, Emir of Aleppo, is a typical north Syrian structure. Further to the east and of more recent date stands the At-Tawba Mosque, planned and arranged on the same lines as the Omayyad Mosque, and interesting on account of its architecture and decoration (doorway, mihrab, leaded-glass windows, etc.).

The suburb of Salhiyah grew up on the mountain side round a fine group of mausolea, madrasahs and convents, most of which are now abandoned or used for somewhat unsuitable purposes. There, in a picturesque spot on the Nahr Yazid, we find the remains of a colonnaded portico of the oldest convent-madrasah of Salhiyah, together with a whole series of monuments built by eminent persons at the court of Nur ad-Din and Saladin. Most of them are mausolea with brick domes, some ribbed and others double, surmounting two drums decorated with ascending and lobate or twin niches. Many of them contain beautiful carved wooden tombs, old leaded-glass windows and

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172 such artistic treasures as the mosaics, the capitals, the Qubba, the minarets and the doors.

In the west portico, large white patches in the mosaics show how much the restoration work done still leaves to be desired. In the north-east section, as part of the careful work carried out by the Directorate of Antiquities, the spaces between the mosaics have been painted a similar colour, with excellent effect, except that the painted surface looks rather dull beside the brilliant surface of the mosaics. Better results might be obtained by mixing the paint with a little marble powder, which would give a slight variety of tone.

It is of course important in any improvement schemes, to consider the general effect of the whole—a fact appreciated by the technical services, which have made plans for building new roads so as to isolate the Great Mosque. In considering these plans, we must bear in mind that the Great Mosque is not simply a building standing by itself: its history and use create an aura influencing the surrounding atmosphere and architecture; the imposing ruins of ancient temples and churches, mausolea, madrasas, khans and suqs form a complex with it.

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172 To the north, there are no less than five highly important monuments. The Adiliya Madrasah (Arab Academy), with its fine doorway and pendant inscription, has been described as "a masterpiece of stonemasonry and bonding". The Zakiya Madrasah (National Library) opposite, once the house of Saladin's father, was converted into a memorial college by the famous Sultan Beibars. Close by the Great Mosque, the Asiriya Madrasah contains the tomb of Saladin, housed in a mausoleum with the characteristic ribbed dome resting on octagonal and sixteen-sided drums. The recent restoration of this mausoleum has been outstandingly successful, especially as regards the enhancement of the general effect of the surroundings. Opposite the north entrance, the Jaqmaqiyah Madrasah and the Turbat Al-Ikhniya, stand like propylaea, guiding the eye to the fine vista of the Byzantine colonnade, the doorway and the minaret.

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172 The monuments on the other sides of the mosque are interesting too, though less obviously so. The artistic interest of some of the khans, suqs and hammams is often apt to pass unnoticed by the casual observer simply because they are still in use, whereas that of the ruins strikes the eye immediately. The architecture of the group of buildings to the south-west of the Great Mosque, however, is extremely good. Passing through the Khan Al-Gumrok with its six large domes supported by pendentives, and the great Khan Al-Harir, with its triple series of small domes surmounting the first storey, we reach first the rich and delightful Asem Palace, a very suitable setting for the folk museum and tourist offices which are to be installed there; and then, after passing the fine façade of the Khan Azad-Pasha, the Midhat-Pasha suq ("Street called Straight"). The development plan includes the widening of this street. If this is done, we hope that due precautions will be taken to avoid the mistakes mentioned above, and that the present character of this street will be preserved, particularly in the western section, where the suqs are still teeming with life and interest. We might at this point stress how very convenient the suqs are, especially in extremes of weather; they protect the crowd of pedestrians from rain and sun, wind and dust alike. They form a dense network, opening out,

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2 [Of the mosque -- ANALYSIS]

its former importance; buildings were seldom converted to other uses and, except for a few that later served for military purposes (such as the one now known as Diocletian's camp, or the forecourt of the temple of Baal, which was transformed into an Arab fortress in the twelfth century), the buildings were never intentionally demolished or the materials of which they were made plundered.

Thus Palmyra may be said to present ideal conditions for archaeological research, offering possibilities that will not be exhausted for a long time. After the description of the visible remains given by the German scholars who worked at Palmyra under the direction of Th. Wiegand, after H. Ingholt's systematic exploration of the burial grounds and the penetrating studies of the monuments, cults, institutions and language of the Palmyrians, made by H. Seyrig, R. Amy, D. Schlumberger, J. G. Février, J. Cantineau, J. Starcky and others, the Syrian Directorate of Antiquities worked out an admirable and extensive scheme for uncovering the entire ruins. The clearing of the agora before the war, and that of the theatre, quite recently, have shown what spectacular and instructive results may one day be gained from the scheme. The work is proceeding steadily but the task is immense and there is still plenty of scope for useful and fruitful co-operation.

A few special problems which have already arisen in connexion with the study and exploration of the Palmyra ruins are worth noting here. The monumental arch, the temple of Baal, the great colonnade and innumerable tombs, towers and hypogaea required extensive restoration and consolidation. The removal of the decorative sculpture of the Yathai hypogaeum and its reconstruction in the Damascus Museum was a difficult undertaking, successfully accomplished. The bold plan adopted to allow of the uncovering of Baal's sanctuary is also worthy of note. The modern town, whose houses filled the temple precincts, was removed and rebuilt further north, beyond the boundary of the ancient city. Now, after 20 years, the whole population agrees that the step was well justified, for the new village, with its wide airy streets, affords healthier and more convenient living conditions; this may serve as an example. The only remaining inhabited building is the charming house of the Antiquities Service in the south-east corner of the precincts, where visiting archaeologists find a welcome and an atmosphere which they much appreciate.

But Palmyra is not only a city; it is the natural centre of an immense region stretching from the Anti-Lebanon mountains to the Euphrates, a region whose prospects and importance are now beginning to be realized. Along the desert routes which meet and cross within it, and where they reach the river, are other sites, marking wayside centres which existed at various times in history. In such places, quite impressive remains have survived to the present day.

THE TWO QASR EL-HEIR

As D. Schlumberger has pointed out in a recent work, Palmyra was once less isolated than is generally believed. Other inhabited centres within the area prospered beside the metropolis. In the plains there were oases made fertile by large-scale irrigation schemes; in the mountains to the north-west, shepherd villages, made habitable by the construction of reservoirs which provided adequate water supplies for the summer months. These villages did not survive the fall of Palmyra and the region

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was subsequently completely abandoned. However, the dams and aqueducts built during the Roman period were still useful in later times to the Byzantines and Arabs. They made it possible to build the two great castles to the west and east of Palmyra which bear the same name and now stand ruined in the midst of an expanse of desert. They were formerly surrounded by walled gardens and had been designed to serve both as palaces and fortresses. 361
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Built by the Caliph Hisham in 727, Qasr-el-Heir el-Gharbi was a luxurious residence. A tall Byzantine tower marks the site of the ruins from afar. All that remains of the Arab palace is the lower masonry of the walls, which were of freestone; they were uncovered between 1936 and 1938 by D. Schlumberger. His excavations not only laid bare the plan of the palace, which was a square flanked by towers, surrounding a central courtyard with porticos and a single entrance. They also brought to light innumerable remnants of a stucco and fresco decoration which is the most original and complete example of Omayyad art in Syria.

Qasr el-Heir es-Charki, also built by Hisham in 729 near a still older fortification that is now in a very ruined state, has walls and towers standing almost intact up to their full height. The upper part of those on either side of the entrance is decorated with a design of arches supported on small columns; the others have a simpler decoration of ornamental courses of brick. The main doorway has a semi-circular tympanum with machicolations overhead.

Though similar in layout and belonging to the same period, the two Qasr el-Heir presented different problems for the Antiquities Service. With the former, it was a matter of discovering and preserving the precious and fragile decoration, which was picked up in fragments at the foot of the walls; it took several years of patient and highly skilled work to remove it and piece it together in the Damascus Museum, where it is now one of the principal exhibits. In the case of the latter, it was necessary to underpin the walls and towers whose foundations had been undermined by damp and desert winds; the maintenance and supply of a group of workers on an isolated, waterless site such as this was a difficult matter. The work has been successfully begun and is to be continued shortly.

RESAFA

Resafa is another of Caliph Hisham's castles, laid out in the form of a square with a central courtyard, defensive wall and towers; it was located and excavated in 1932, by the German mission under Mrs. K. Otto-Dorn, among the remains of a great Moslem centre. The Caliph died and was buried there.

Up to that time, Resafa had been known chiefly for the Christian monuments that had been built inside its great walls; they are of great interest in the history of art and architecture in northern Syria from the fifth to the seventh century of our era. The largest and best preserved is the basilica of St. Sergius, the plan of which has recently been reconstituted by J. Kollwitz in the light of his excavation work; the structure is said to date from the second half of the fifth century. The remains of the martyry and a second great basilica are still partially hidden; excavation is revealing the beautiful carvings of the semi-domed apses and the capitals and arches. There are also a few smaller buildings and, outside the walls, a funerary

361 chapel. The peculiar nature of the crystalline stone of these
172 buildings gives them a very distinctive stamp.

344 The rich ornamentation of the northern doorway of the enclosure, with its five arches of different sizes supported on columns is also remarkable; in structure and style it has been compared to certain parts of Diocletian's palace at Split.

The size of the buildings and the extent and isolation of the site make Resafa a difficult place to explore. It is gratifying to know that work has now been resumed and it is to be hoped that it will soon be possible to continue it on a large scale.

THE VALLEY OF THE EUPHRATES

361 The Euphrates route must also be considered while we are
172 speaking of the desert routes; it too is marked at intervals by large fortified enclosures, built at different times at points where the tracks fanning out from Palmyra crossed the river. Dura and Raqqa are among the best known of these fortifications.

Dura-Europos (Es-Salhiyeh) is a Seleucid foundation dating from the end of the fourth century B.C. Occupied by the Parthians and later by the Romans, it was at that time closely dependant upon Palmyra. It was captured and destroyed by the Sassanids in A.D. 256. The town is situated on a plateau above the Euphrates flanked by two narrow ravines. Guarding the river crossing, and at the same time a caravan city and river port, it held a position of great strategic and economic importance. It was not until 1921, with the chance discovery of the paintings from the temple of the Palmyrene gods, now in the Damascus Museum, that attention was drawn to the site. Its investigation was begun by F. Cumont and continued by Yale University under the direction of M. J. Rostovtzeff. On the traditional Greek chessboard street plan of the town, a number of buildings were located and excavated, including 11 temples, two small sanctuaries, a Christian church, a synagogue, the market, several baths and numerous houses. The many treasures found included groups of frescoes from the church and synagogue, now reconstructed and preserved at Yale and Damascus respectively.

Although the Greek and Roman town at Raqqa was of some importance in its time, it is the Moslem remains of the new town, Al-Rafiq, founded in 772 by the Caliph Al-Mansur which have monopolized attention. The Baghdad gate with its brickwork decoration and the twelfth-century mosque with its arches and round minaret are the most striking monuments. Quite recently the Syrian Directorate of Antiquities began a search for the remains of the palaces which, in the ninth century, were a favourite residence of the Abbassid dynasty. The excavations, carried out by Nassib Saliby, brought to light in 1952, at a spot about two miles north of the city wall, a large group of buildings containing many rooms and formerly surrounded by gardens. A Kufic inscription bearing the name

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connexion with the particular question with which we are concerned, for their preservation and presentation do not call for any special comments. 172

The excavations at Ras-Shamra are still going forward actively; the site is in the hands of the French mission which, for the last 24 years, has been under the direction of C. Schaeffer. The interest of the ruins is partly due to the sensational finds that have been made there, and only the well-informed visitor to the spot will call to mind the age-old past of Ugarit, the innumerable texts that have been unearthed and are, in some cases, still being deciphered, and the precious objects discovered here, the most recently excavated of which are at present on view in the exhibition at the Damascus Museum.

The great monuments of Amrit and the Cyclopean walls of the island of Ruad, protecting that impregnable refuge from the sea, are still eloquent reminders of the Phoenician mastery of the seas.

Nearer our own time, the great Roman theatre of Jebel, which is being excavated by the Directorate of Antiquities, is emerging as a building of quite spectacular proportions and of very considerable interest for certain of its details (structure of the sloping vaults supporting the tiers, arrangement of the stairs around the orchestra).

Mention must also be made of the great tetrapylon at Latakia, which has just been considerably restored.

CRUSADERS' CASTLES

However, the most striking monuments in the whole region from the coast to the mountainous hinterland are the great buildings raised by the Crusaders. They bear witness to the colossal efforts made by the Western peoples, over two centuries, to gain a foothold on this coast, as do the opposing Arab citadels built on the Orontes in order to hold them in check. Peerless masterpieces of medieval military architecture, they impress not only by their strong defensive works and the 172 344

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344 technical skill of their builders, but also by the admirable specimens of Gothic art to be found in them.

The three great castles of Sahyun, Marqab and the Krak are most impressive of all, owing to their superb position, massive proportions and historical importance.

Sahyun (Sigon; Sadoe of the Crusaders) is situated on a narrow ridge between two deep ravines, on which the Phoenicians and the Byzantines had also once established a foothold. It is a large and rather curious group of buildings, to which Byzantines, Crusaders and Arabs all in turn made their contribution. One of the most striking features is the extraordinary way the rock has been hewn out to isolate the castle, while leaving a slender pillar in the middle of the moat to support the drawbridge. Marqab (Margat of the Crusaders), like an eyrie dominating the coastal road above Baniyas, stands on a steep-sided triangular plateau, protected by its immense double sweep of fortifications. The chapel, with its undivided nave, has two beautiful arched doorways. The Krak des Chevaliers, most famous of all these castles, from its lonely vantage-point among the bare mountains, kept watch on the Homs gap. Its strong defensive works, with the double line of fortifications, round towers, curtains, machicolations, underground passages and great sloping glacis, seeming to continue the slopes outside the fortress, contrast not only with the architecture of the great hall and its portico, with their cross-ribbed vaults, pillared doorways, mullioned windows and carved ornamentation, but also with the austere architecture of the chapel, with its undivided nave and pointed barrel vault. The surrender of the Knights Hospitallers to Beibars, and the fall of the Krak, in 1271, heralded the collapse of the Crusaders.

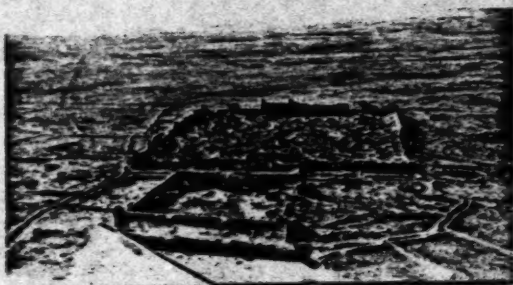
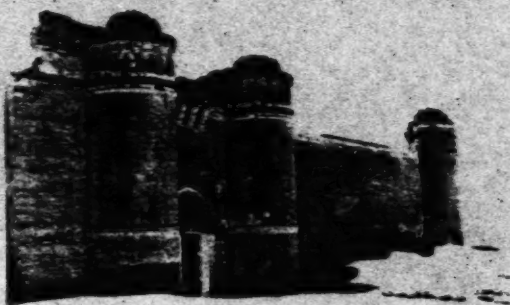
The same contrast between the exterior and interior architecture strikes the visitor to the stronghold of Safita (Castel-Blanc), around which modern houses have been built in such a way as to preserve the concentric ground plan of the medieval town. The great square tower, in whose walls there are only a few tiny apertures barely visible to the eye, contains a massive and beautiful church with an undivided nave and pointed barrel vault, and, on the upper storey, a high room with a groined vault, divided into two by a line of pillars. This contrast is also to be found at Tartus where the remains of two beautiful rooms with cross-ribbed vaulting are still to be seen inside the fortress of the Templars; surrounded by enormous ramparts. At some distance, inside the town, the almost completely preserved cathedral of Our Lady of Tortosa, an interesting example of a fortified church, with its austere and very unusual façade, its corner towers, its three vaulted naves and the curious and as yet unexplained structure of one of its pillars, still remains "one of the most beautiful monuments left on this coast by the Crusaders".

PRESENT-DAY PROBLEMS

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658 The monuments of which we have been speaking call for two observations.

Firstly, it must be emphasized that considerable expenditure is necessary for the upkeep and consolidation of these great groups of buildings, certain parts of which are in constant danger of collapse. The Directorate of Antiquities is doing valiant work, but its resources are limited and it is unable to take action everywhere at the same time. It first turned its attention to the urgent repairs needed by the Krak des Cheva-

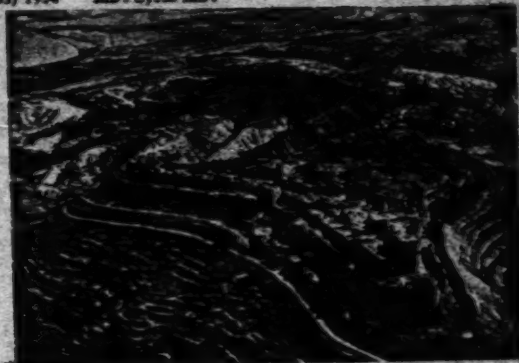
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- 361. Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi. Aerial view.
- 344. Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi. Entrance to the main building.
- 172. Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi. Aerial view.

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40. Castle of Mough. Aerial view.
41. Castle of Mough. Second line of
fortification.
42. Castle of Saba. Aerial view.

following P35-K